

Telecommunications Academy for Southeastern Europe:

INA Academy

Authors:

P. Angelidis and I. Konstas

Southeastern Europe Telecommunications and Informatics Research Institute (INA)
9th km Thessaloniki-Thermi, P.O.Box 60080, 57001-Thessaloniki, Greece
e-mail: academy@inatelecom.org

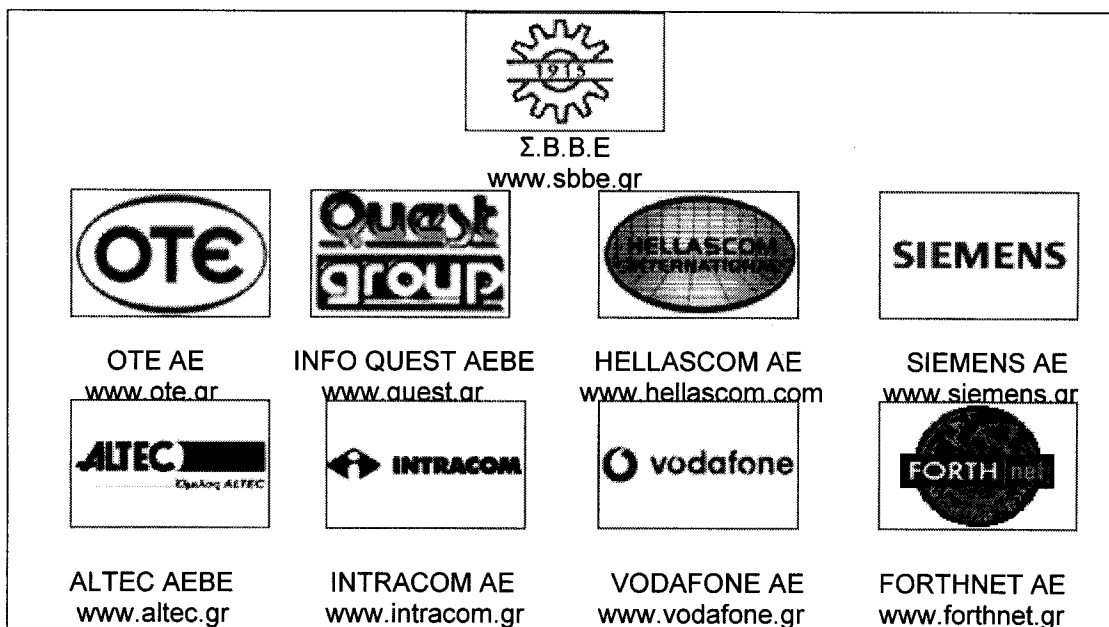
Abstract: This document is a description of the role, organisational structure, aims and strategy of the SETA-INA Academy created by Southeastern Europe Telecommunications & Informatics Research Institute (INA) during 2002.

INA Academy has been established as the Southeastern European Telecommunications Academy (SETA), which incorporates representatives from various public and private institutions from the ICT sector with the aim to provide the institutional framework for the coming together of all SE countries on an equal basis to further discuss all relevant issues (convergence to EU, usage of new / existing IC technologies such as spectrum management etc) and to receive specialised support services in the form of studies, training seminars, working groups, round tables etc.

The Academy project aims through the existing institutional structure to promote support services and training to the regulatory institutions in the involved Southeastern European partners in order to establish a unified and coherent method of acting, thinking and policy-making on information and communication technologies in the region and thus establish concrete benefits for telecom operators, customers and government regulators.

Introduction

The Federations of Industries of Northern Greece and the largest Telecommunications and Informatics Industries of Greece (see table 1) jointly brought INA Institute into existence.



They have pooled their resources and expertise to create the Southeastern Europe Telecommunications and Informatics Research Institute (INA), as an organization designed to facilitate investment in the region's telecom and informatics markets by analysing regional market trends, enhancing the exchange of technological expertise and helping to develop a regulatory framework for the regions telecom markets. The region of the Balkan Peninsula is in apparent need of complete scientific analysis of its needs in Telecommunications and Information Technology and in addition it is in need of training services in the topics of the regulatory framework in Telecom and Information-Communications Technologies (ICT), and in issues of "hard" and "soft" infrastructure.

The Southeastern Europe Telecommunications & Informatics Research Institute (INA) designed the creation of a Telecommunications Academy in order to satisfy the needs for training and formation in the sectors of Telecommunications and ICT with the distinctive title Southastern Europe Telecommunications Academy (SETA-INA Academy). For the realisation of the plan for the creation of a Telecommunications Academy in Southeastern Europe (SEE) there was expressed support of the Hellenic National Committee for Telecommunications and Post (EETT) and of the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communications and from all the Regulatory Authorities and the relevant Ministries of SE Europe.

It implements its mission through training provision, organising research, networking and facilitating exchange of experience. Located in Thessaloniki, Greece INA Academy draws both on the experience of the country as well as from the achievements from the European Union and the SE Europe countries. The target audience of the INA Academy activities is comprised of ICT policy makers, regulators, as well as industry executives. Partnerships are salient for the implementation of the mission. The academy has managed to develop collaborations on a regional and international level with peer institutions, relevant authorities and governments.

Mission of INA Academy

INA Academy was established in 2002 as a non-governmental, non-for-profit organisation founded for the dissemination of best practices in telecom regulation and policymaking and the transfer of knowledge concerning ICT issues. Its primary geographical focus is on the countries of South Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, FYROM, Greece, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey). In the longer term, while retaining its initial Southeastern Europe focus, as soon as the academy establishes itself as a leader in telecommunications training in SEE region, it could consider a strategic expansion in other regions such as Middle East and Black Sea. The experience obtained from SEE will help INA Academy to make the right moves minimizing the risk. However it is too early to attempt this expansion.

INA Academy Nodes

In addition to this INA Academy is establishing regional nodes for training, consulting and information dissemination in every country in SEE region. Some countries in South East Europe may prefer to establish a common facility in order to reduce cost and increase collaboration. All facilities are treated on an equal basis in terms of support. The establishment of the regional nodes will be supported financially and technically by INA. The Thessaloniki node is operating and the Sofia and Tirana nodes will be established and operating in September 2003. By the end of 2003 it is expected to have operating INA Academy Nodes in all SEE countries.

Mission Statement & Objectives

The Mission statement broadly defines the primary business and is a 'grand design' statement for the future, where the Objectives define what must be done to accomplish the business Mission. The table below includes all Objectives, which are derived from the Mission statement.

Business Mission	Objectives
<p>INA Academy offers support services and training to telecommunications regulatory institutions in SEE region for the benefits of telecom operators, customers and government regulators.</p> <p>INA Academy strives to promote high quality and effective services while acting as a catalyst to promote interregional collaboration in SEE as well as convergence to EU telecommunications standards in SEE region and other areas.</p>	<p>Interregional Collaboration in SEE: Act as a catalyst to enhance the spirit of collaboration among the countries in SEE and to disseminate best practices and experience in SEE region.</p> <p>Support: Provide consulting support to all participants</p> <p>Training: Provide training services.</p> <p>Quality: Establish quality standards at internationally acceptable levels and transfer best practices.</p> <p>Effective Services: Provide services <i>when</i> and <i>where</i> needed.</p> <p>Brokering Consulting Services: Provide consulting support.</p> <p>EU Convergence: Act as a catalyst to support SEE countries with the convergence process to comply with EU telecommunication requirements.</p> <p>Strategic Expansion: As soon as INA Academy establishes itself as a leader in telecommunications training in SEE region, it could consider a strategic expansion in other regions such as Middle East and Black Sea having a similar experience from SEE.</p>

Definition of aims of INA Academy

INA Academy aims to play a significant role in the Telecommunications Market of the SE Europe. Its main objective is two-fold. Firstly, to operate as a node for dissemination of information between actors involved in the market, best practices on regulatory issues and the promotion of co-operation, integration and convergence of the SE European countries among each other and with their neighbouring countries. Complementary, the academy operates as a centre for the provision of high quality training on regulatory issues concerning the telecommunications market and secondly, to offer technical, legal and financial advice on the basis of an assessment of the technological, legal, regulatory and business environment of the markets in SE European countries.

In this context INA Academy operates in the following lines:

Catalyst. INA Academy was established with the primary objective to facilitate sharing of experiences and points of views among policy makers and regulation enforcers from South Eastern Europe (SEE) on issues relating to the regulation and development of the Telecommunications & Information Technology¹ markets in the region. To fulfil this mission, the academy implements working groups and develops a systematic methodology to facilitate the sharing of updated, electronically supported, real time information between its participants.

Training Services. INA Academy is a training centre, offering high quality training mainly on regulatory issues concerning telecommunications. In addition, since regulation has significant impact on the business and technical aspect of telecommunications, INA Academy also provides relevant courses, covering the needs of the Market. INA Academy training courses are delivered in a variety of methods according to the relevant needs and certain financial issues, ranging from CBT (Computer based Training) and e-learning to seminars offered in traditional methods.

Brokering Consulting Services. INA Academy could also act as a broker for consulting services offered by reputable Consulting firms. INA Academy has begun to create a database, containing Consulting firms with expertise on the specific regulatory sectors. A consulting firm is included in the database if it satisfies certain criteria, set by the Academy in order to ensure high quality standards and after paying a subscription fee.

Information Services. INA Academy acts, as aforementioned, as a node for dissemination of information on the regional telecommunications market, of best practices on regulatory issues and of co-operation opportunities among the players of the market. INA Academy will soon maintain an Informative Portal and a regularly issues e-Newsletters as dissemination mechanisms.

Participants per target country

Through the telecommunications market and the regulatory environment analysis performed for the countries in the SEE region, the need for the provision of high quality training on regulatory issues has been identified.

The participants of the Academy can be identified and clustered according to their role, priorities, interests and agendas.

The identification and clustering procedure is quite important for identifying the “market” needs and the range of issues and policies INA Academy address.

In general, the following “groups” are recognized as potential clients of INA Academy:

- NRAs (National Regulatory Authorities)
- Ministries and other governmental institutions.
- PTTs and the Incumbent Operators in the SEE countries.
- Alternative local telecom operators and new entrants.
- Mobile operators.
- Strategic Suppliers.

¹ It is understood that telecommunications and information technology are rapidly converging in a process highly boosted by the massive expansion and penetration of the Internet. Within the context of this document, wherever Telecommunications is mentioned it is understood that this is not limited to exclude modern prospects and that it definitely includes (not exhaustively) policy and regulation on the internet and the new services such, as e-government, e-health, e-business, e-learning. Telecommunications in the present document is used in this broader sense.

Interregional Collaboration in SEER

INA Academy is gradually establishing itself as a leader in telecommunication consulting support and training and at the same time aspires to be a *catalyst* to promote *Interregional Collaboration in SEE*. Currently, the academy has been promoting interregional collaboration in SEE through SETA Working Groups.

Pivotal importance for the strategic planning of INA Academy is placed on the two (2) Working Groups (on Regulatory and on Policy issues respectively), which were established during the 3rd Regional Symposium in Sofia, Bulgaria on December 2-3, 2002, as an integral part of INA Academy. The Working Groups deal with technical and regulatory matters in the fields of Informatics and Telecommunications. Representatives from ministries and telecommunications regulatory authorities from the countries of SEE participate in the two Working Groups.

Furthermore, the two Working Groups design the curricula (in relation to the needs of the SE European countries in Telecommunications and Informatics) that define the Academy's training activities. Most significantly, the Working Groups offer the opportunity to synchronize and coordinate activities of participant organizations, allowing in this way for common initiatives to be taken and mutual benefits to be reaped. However, the basic role of the Working Groups has been their operation as a forum of dialogue among policy makers, regulators and the industry. Ultimately, the Academy serves as a disseminator of best practices, an all-too-important requirement and necessary procedure for the general convergence of the SE European standards to the EU standards and the regional development of the Informatics and Telecommunications markets.

Furthermore INA Academy supports the development of the regional co-operation in telecommunications and actively participates in multinational projects of mutual interest for SEE countries. Currently INA Academy participates:

- **eSEEurope Initiative** – This is an initiative with the approval of Stability Pact that targets the support of Southeast Europe countries in the design and implementation of a telecommunications and IT development strategy with the ultimate goal to economic stability and development of the region.
- **International Telecommunications Union Centre of Excellence** – This is an initiative of ITU with the objective to create a network training centres concerning regulatory and normative subjects both for the private as well as for the public sector. INA Academy participates in the Steering Committee of the CoE.

Offer Training Courses

INA Academy focuses mainly on *regulatory courses* since these type of courses are not offered by the local market in SEE region. The training of technical courses are covered by all the telecommunications suppliers which educate and update the technical personnel on any issues. The training courses are designed primarily for telecom regulators, the senior staff of regulatory and policymaking organizations, and others designing to acquire an in-depth understanding of the issues and options surrounding telecom regulation.

Currently it serves the telecommunications market of SEE and offers courses and seminars based on the needs of its participants. In order to satisfy all countries according to their specific needs, INA Academy offers the courses in a variety of ways: traditional classroom, CBT, Via internet (WBT, synchronous). The training is offered as a group of courses or on individual basis, leading to a telecomm certificate. All courses are taught in English.

Provide Consulting Support

INA Academy provides consulting brokerage service as a supplementary service to training. More specifically, on demand will offer the following services:

- Establish and maintain a database of consulting firms.
- Provide references for other consulting firms in SEE region and EU.
- Provide registration.
- Provide evaluation of services of consulting firms.
- Provide a short list of consulting firms based on client's demands.

High Quality and Effective Services

In order to ensure high quality standards INA Academy collaborates with well respected telecomm organizations in Europe such as: ITU, EU (DG INFOSO) Leading Universities (Aristotle University of

Thessaloniki, National Technical University of Athens, Technical University of Denmark etc) and telecomm institutions in the region.

The transfer to the other SEE countries the best practices from the recent experience of Greece and the EU is a yardstick for the Academy curricula. In order to increase customer satisfaction, the organization follows closely the needs of its clients and is able to offer the courses and seminars on an optimal way. The specific needs of the clients are identified before each training activity in order to deliver the courses in the most efficient way tailored to the needs of the participants. INA Academy Working Groups as already mentioned are instrumental in this process. The courses in SEE countries are designed on as needed basis. Furthermore the academy utilizes the existing knowledge of its shareholders to offer effective services in SEE.

Conclusion

This article outlined the implementation of the Southeastern Europe Telecommunication Academy (INA Academy) project in the SEE region. The main objective of the strategy of the Academy is to support the creation of a unified, coherent and investment-friendly market in SEE region and assist the countries of the region to excel in the new economy. However, the current realities in the region are not matching the potential it has. The transition period and the changing environment is placing all actors of the ICT sector under pressure to implement radical changes in their working procedures in order to improve competitiveness and respond to the market demands for the sake of their own survival in an increasingly competitive marketplace. The extent of the transformation process in SE Europe countries is considerable.

Nearly everything in addition to legal and regulatory issues in the organization of the sector is in the process of "re-thinking" including its **strategy, management style, organizational structure, working procedures, organizational culture, performance and institutional image, as well as HRM/D policies and systems** in order to put them in-line with the new demands of a Global Information Economy. Such restructures are not exclusively needed in the SE Europe region. The European Union, since the Lisbon declaration, is pursuing the goal "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge -based economy in the world". SE Europe is **capable and should** attempt to leapfrog and close the "digital divide" by implementing drastic reforms.

The reform process demands a Human capacity that needs continuous training and constant flexibility. INA Academy is designed and established to assist the SEE countries in this hard process by providing training and support to their human resources and enable them to participate as equals to the EU effort in achieving the Lisbon declaration for the whole of Europe, without exclusions and leftovers.
